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ABSTRACT

For the past 3 years, Pasco (Washington) School District has been implementing Outcome Based Education (OBE), a nationally validated school improvement process developed by John Champlain. OBE posits that all kids can learn, and learn well, those concepts schools identify as critical to learning. During the 1989-90 school year, Pasco conducted a formal research study to assess the first 3 years of its OBE implementation process. Instruments were developed to measure success indicators in five specific exit outcomes (self-esteem, thinking skills, process skills, self-directed learning, and concern for others) for grade levels 3, 6, 9, and 12. In addition, three inventories were developed to assess staff acceptance of the OBE improvement process. Initial conclusions showed that investment of time and money paid off. Staff showed high commitment to the "all kids can learn" goal. Time to process new information was the biggest contributor to changing beliefs. Teacher skills were beginning to grow, and student indicators showed a definite need to continue improvement efforts. Student feelings of success declined in all areas from grade 3 to grade 12, especially in self-esteem; the researchers attribute this decline to past practices. Areas deserving greater attention include staff expectations, community support, time for training and teaming, and student and staff feelings of efficacy. Pasco also learned some valuable lessons regarding the assessment process. (6 references) (MLH)

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DEVELOPING QUALITY ORGANIZATIONS

Through the Process of Ongoing Assessment

by Larry Nyland and Stephanie Tesch

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"I believe that we have the ability to produce anything to which we can reasonably aspire."

- Response from 90% of the Pasco School District staff

INTRODUCTION

Creating a quality organization requires that we focus on what we want, how we assess it and what we can change to create it. If our mission as a school district is to create greater success for greater numbers of students, we must find ways to make the system work toward that end. School systems are complex organizations - success comes from countless small changes made by people at all levels in the organization working together toward a common goal. No single program will create success for students. No single person will create success for students.

William Glasser, in his new book, The Quality School, simplifies W. Edwards Deming's quality management into four steps:

1) Discuss quality with those who have to produce it.
2) Demonstrate quality to those who produce it.
3) Measure quality by those who produce it.
4) Remove system barriers to quality.

This total system-wide view has already transformed U.S. companies that are learning to compete internationally. Organizations that do not learn how to build "continuous product improvement" are steadily losing ground to those who do. Peter Senge at MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) is working with top Chief Executive Officers in a dozen of the U.S.'s largest corporations, helping them to learn how to create "learning organizations", which can respond quickly and automatically to new demands and new threats. They reinvent themselves daily, constantly finding ways to do their jobs better, more quickly, more productively.

This type of "systems thinking" is now required in education, as well. Gone are the days when a positional leader knew enough to make all the decisions for a large and complex organization. Even if a leader does have all of the right answers, simply "telling" others what to do is no longer an effective managment style.

This article is a case study of one school district in the state of Washington. It describes the research methodology used to identify successful ways of measuring student achievement and system improvement.

PASCO RESEARCH DESIGN

Pasco School District, in Southeast Washington, has been involved in school improvement efforts for the past eight years. For the last

three years, it has been implementing Outcome Based Education, a nationally-validated school improvement process developed by Dr. John Champlain in Johnson City, New York. Outcome Based Education (OBE) is based on the belief that all kids can learn, and learn well, those concepts which schools identify as critical learning. A holistic model, it incorporates the best of what we know about student learning and of how people work in organizations. In validating this school improvement process in Johnson City, the National Diffusion Network (NDN) looked at what the school district wanted to accomplish, how they attempted to achieve it, and whether the results matched the original objectives. The NDN validation process concluded that Outcome Based Education does indeed produce the desired results.

As a result of Pasco's school improvement efforts, the Washington Business Roundtable (a coalition of thirty major corporations in Washington), selected Pasco as one of two ongoing assessment sites. For the next five years, Pasco will participate in a longitudinal assessment project which focuses on continued school improvement in Pasco and dissemination of successful assessment techniques statewide.

During the 1989-90 school year Pasco conducted a formal research study to assess the first three years of implementation of Outcome Based Education.

Selection of Researcher. Pasco used a variety of networks to

identify top evaluation researchers across the country, including consultation with State Department of Education and Regional Educational Labs. A District evaluation committee used a decision making process from Outcome Based Education called "success connections" to outline criteria for the research design. This included intentionally reviewing the four elements of the OBE screen: what we want, what we know, what we believe and what we should do about a specific issue.

[FIGURE: SUCCESS CONNECTION SCREEN]

The Request For Proposal (RFP) was sent to various research institutions soliciting written proposals. Subsequently two institutions were invited to make presentations to the evaluation committee. Applied Planning Associates (APA), a research institution affiliated with Brigham Young University, was selected to develop a series of instruments and interviews designed around: 1) what the district wanted to achieve, 2) the research indicators of student and system success, and 3) how that data might be used to help create system improvement as a district. APA head Norm Hyatt designed a series of such instruments, met frequently with the evaluation team to refine them and then piloted the instruments with several Outcome Based School Districts.

Student Outcomes. The Outcome Based Education process focuses on demonstrated student success in specific "exit outcomes": self esteem, thinking skills, process skills, self directed learning and

concern for others. Hyatt developed a bank of 600 items that could be used as indicators of success in these five outcomes. The list was reviewed by sixty professionals involved with Outcome Based Education and reduced to approximately 100 items for each of four grade levels: third, sixth, ninth, and twelfth. Test booklets were developed and students completed the scoring sheets in the spring of 1990.

[FIGURE: STUDENT OUTCOMES CLASSIFICATIONS (INDICATORS)]

This instrument is the only student outcomes classification, nationwide, designed around these research based student exit behaviors.

School Improvement Efforts. The Outcome Based Education process depends on district and employee commitment to the concept that all students can learn. It is essential, then, to narrow the gap between what we know is successful for students, and what we do in the classroom and in the entire school system to make that happen.

Three inventories were developed to assess staff acceptance of the process. First, statements from the belief system and philosophy of Outcome Based Education were enumerated and employees were asked to declare their beliefs on a seven-point continuum. Teachers were asked to rate themselves on three research based belief statements:

- all students can learn and succeed
- success breeds success

- schools control the conditions for success

and ten philosophy statements such as:

- all students can achieve mastery and excellence
- students learn best in a positive environment
- successful schools build partnerships with the home.

Second, employees were asked to complete a "Concept Assessment Questionnaire" showing the degree to which they accepted and implemented twenty aspects of Outcome Based Education. They were then asked to rate the degree to which they had been involved in, and had success with, ten key components of change. Finally, staff members were asked to respond to open ended questions about the change process:

- What are the key factors that cause change in organizations?
- What are the critcal elements of effective decision making?
- What do you believe has empowered you to change your behavior?

Third, an interview component was developed to allow staff an opportunity to elaborate on their responses. Seven trained researchers interviewed a random selection of parents, teachers and students, as well as school board members and the administrative staff.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The evaluation report answered questions in two areas: student growth and implementation of school improvement. The information was compiled during the spring and summer and was delivered to the district during a week-long training session in August. Administrative and teaching staff then met in teams to develop plans for the up-coming school year.

Initial conclusions showed that:

1) Investment of time and money paid off. Emphasis on staff belief and commitment showed up as positive ratings in the study; groups with the greatest investment were most committed.

2) Time to process new information was the biggest contributor to changing beliefs. Teaming of teachers, networks of teams and time for teachers to talk/discuss using a common language were cited as major factors.

3) A consistently high level of commitment by <u>all</u> staff to the belief that all kids can learn shows that the district can eventually create success for all kids.

Pasco's progress in implementing school improvement seems to follow the "Success Connection" format. Teacher commitment (What we

Believe) was reflected in uniformly high ratings. Teacher knowledge (What we Know) about the Outcome Based Education concepts showed increases. Teacher skills (What we Do) were beginning to grow, while student success (What we Want) indicators showed a definite need to continue improvement efforts. Time is needed to raise student success to the same high level achieved in the area of teacher commitment.

[Figure: Normal Curve vs Mastery Curve]

Baseline data for students indicated that past practices were reflected in student's attitudes:

- Student feelings of success declined in all areas from grade three to grade twelve - especially in the area of self-esteem.
- Students felt less successful in "knowledge" areas than they did in other areas, even those that are taught less thoroughly.

This re-emphasizes the need to convince all students that they can learn.

Wick, in his book School Based Evaluation, says that making mid-course corrections is one of the best uses of evaluative data. This study provided a rich source of data for making such corrections. Areas that deserve attention include:

- clearer expectations for staff
- increased community support

- additional time, training and teaming
- student and staff feelings of efficacy.

Finally, Pasco learned some important lessons about the process of assessment:

1. Interviews are a rich source of information.
2. Specific planned time set aside for staff to complete surveys insures a higher response rate.
3. Questions need to be clear from the inception about what you want to find out.
4. Researchers need to be attuned to what the district is trying to do.
5. There <u>are</u> ways to measure "soft" data, such as student self-esteem.

CONCLUSION

Pasco is committed to a **continuous process of school improvement** that is "outcome based". When everyone in the system acts daily on the best knowledge and data, the district becomes a "learning organization". When you have:

- agreed upon what you want
- found ways to teach and model it
- identified ways to measure it, and
- changed the system to get more of it

then you create not just The Quality School envisioned by Glasser, but rather a Quality District that acts daily in ways that increase success for greater numbers of staff and students.

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Illustrations for
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Developing Qual
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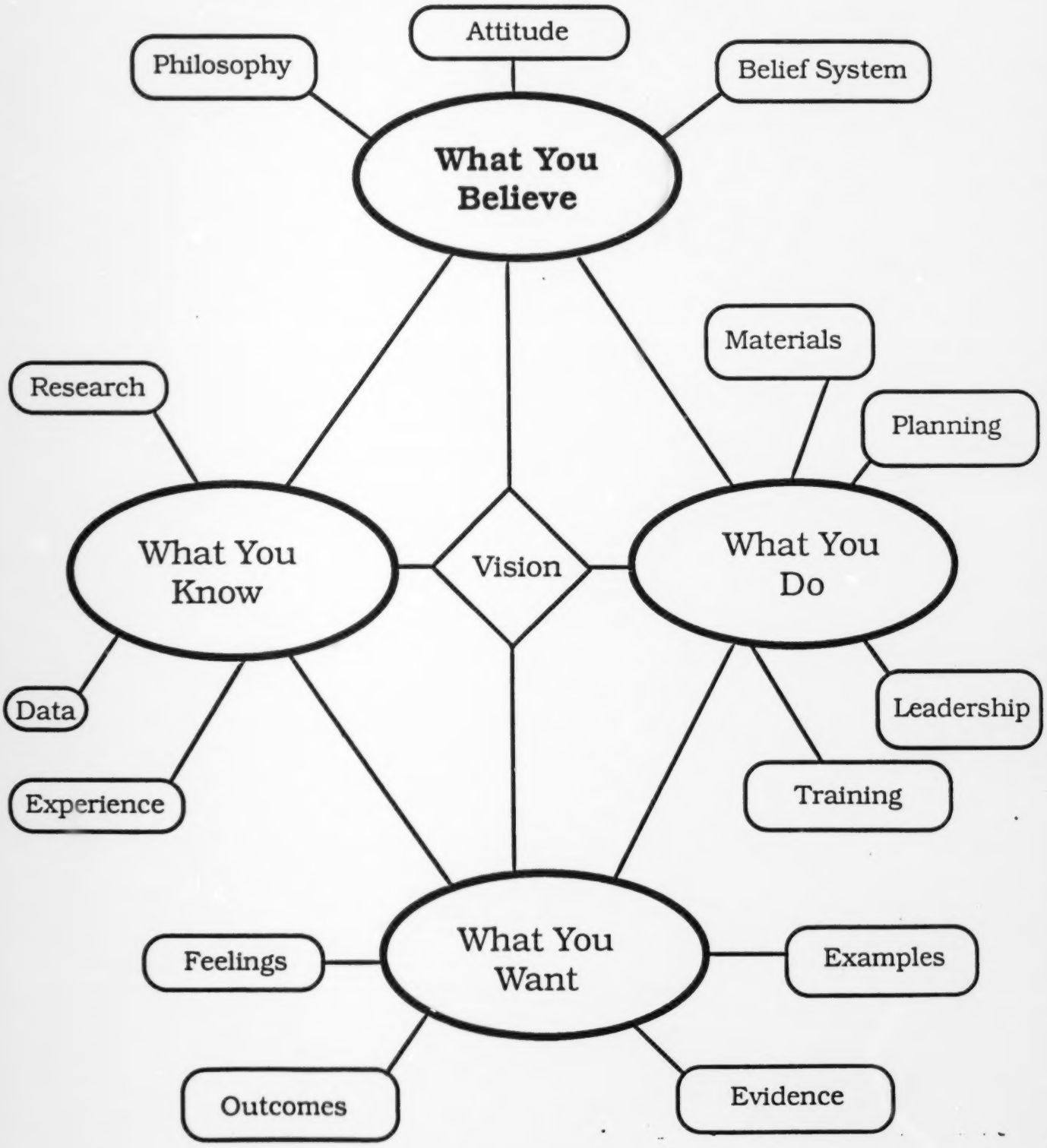
SUCCESS CONNECTIONS



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Student Outcomes Classifications (Indicators):
The Hyatt ODDM Evaluation Schema, 1990

Student Outcomes	Number of Items		
	Grade 3	Grade 6	Grades 9 and 12
TOTAL	80	100	120
Self-Esteem	80	100	120
Self-Directed Learner	56	71	88
Basic Thinking Skills			
Knowledge	19	24	27
Comprehension	9	13	16
Application	11	16	24
Analysis	6	12	21
Synthesis	6	12	22
Evaluation	33	42	54
Process Skills			
Decision Making	30	40	57
Problem Solving	11	18	29
Communicating	19	25	33
Accountability	39	49	62
Group Process	14	18	21
Concern for Others	12	15	19

Figure 2.1.6

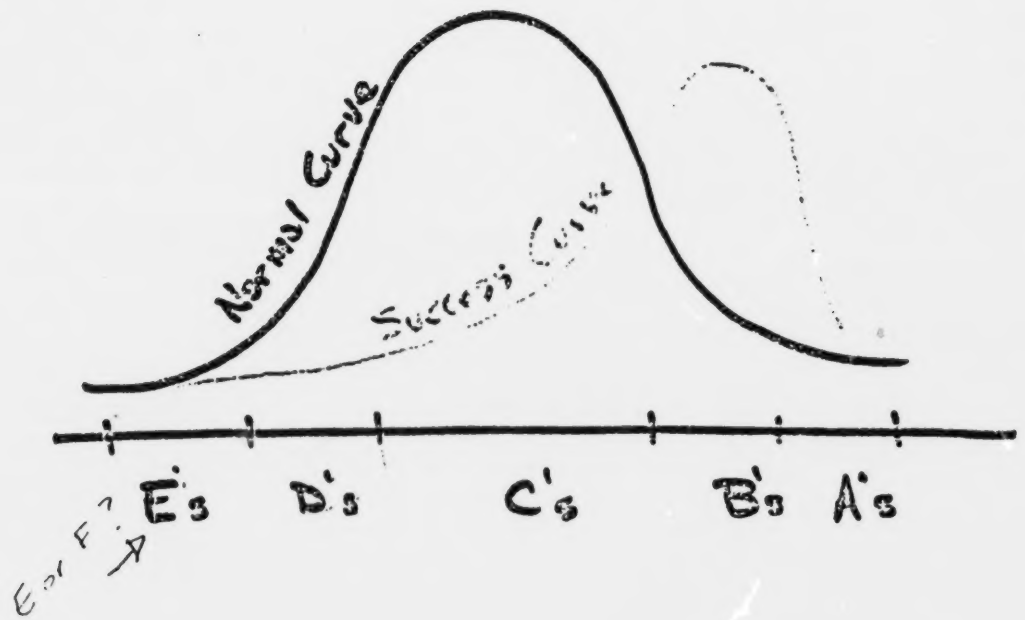

Figure 3 -9

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